

History of the Prophets

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PREFACE

In this treatise I have dealt with the lives of the prophets as they are given in the Holy Qur'ān. My chief object in presenting it to the public is to remove the prevailing misconception that the Holy Qur'ān takes its narratives from the Bible or Jewish and Christian traditions. For this purpose I have contrasted these narratives as met with in the Holy Qur'ān with their versions as met with in the Bible or Jewish and Christian traditions. It will be found that wherever previous record has cast a slur on the character of a prophet, the Holy Qur'ān has invariably vindicated it. The Holy Book has further brought out facts which enhance the moral value of these narratives and removed defects and contradictions which have found way into sacred history due to manipulation of facts or carelessness in recording them. This affords the clearest evidence that Divine Inspiration and not any previous record or tradition was the source from which the Prophet obtained information. By doing away with the profanity of sacred history, the Holy Qur'ān has rendered immense service to the Bible itself. This is in accordance with its claim.

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INTRODUCTION

An essential difference between the histories of the prophets as they are narrated in the Holy Qur'ān and the Bible may be pointed out at the very outset. The Bible contains a record of genealogies and some personal history while the Holy Qur'ān deals only with the life-work of a prophet relating to the grand object of reformation and as to how he succeeded in establishing the truth and uprooting evil.

The Arabic word for prophet is *nabī*, which is derived from *naba'*, meaning *an announcement of great utility*, also a *prophecy which gives information concerning the future*. The word *nabī* in its literal significance is applicable to anyone to whom prophecies about the future are revealed, but in the technical language of Islām it is applicable only to a man who is chosen by God to deliver His message to mankind. Such a person is also called a *rasūl* (*messenger*), which literally means *one sent*. The two words, *nabī* and *rasūl*, are interchangeable, but *rasūl* literally carries a wider significance, for the angels are also called *rusul* (messengers) (35:1).

The prophet, according to the Holy Qur'ān, must be a human being, and hence it does not accept the doctrine of *incarnation*, or God in flesh. The reformation of man is entrusted to men to whom Divine will is revealed, because only a man could serve as a model for men; even an angel could not have served that purpose. How could God in flesh serve as a model for frail human beings who have to meet hundreds of temptations, whereas for God there exists no possible temptation? Hence the Holy Qur'ān has affirmed in the clearest words that only prophets, or men to whom God revealed His will, could be sent as reformers:

“Had there been in the earth angels walking about secure, We would have sent down to them from the heaven an angel as messenger.” (17:95)

“And We sent not before thee any but men to whom We sent revelation... Nor did We give them bodies not eating food.” (21:7, 8)

To every prophet was given a book for the guidance of his people:

“So Allāh raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He revealed with them the Book with truth, that it might judge between people concerning that in which they differed.” (2:213)

“Certainly We sent Our messengers with clear arguments, and sent down with them the Book and the measure.” (57:25)

The prophets were all sinless, both their words and their deeds being in accordance with Divine commandments:

“And We sent no messenger before thee but We revealed to him that there is no God but Me, so serve Me. And they say: The Beneficent has taken to Himself a son. Glory be to Him! Nay, they are honoured servants—They speak not before He speaks, and according to His command they act.” (21:25-27)

“And it is not for a prophet to act dishonestly.” (3:161)

Prophets, according to the Holy Qur’ān, were needed to enable man to rise to higher stages of life. In accordance with this Divine scheme, revelation was as much a need for one people as for another. God had endowed all men with the power to conquer nature, not one particular nation to the exclusion of others. He gave His physical sustenance to all men alike. Hence revelation which was needed for the moral and spiritual progress of man could not be given to one man or one nation to the exclusion of others. Prophets were, therefore, sent to every nation, though the names of all of them have not been mentioned in the Qur’ān:

“And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them.” (35:24)

“And for every nation there is a messenger.” (10:47)

“And (We sent) messengers We have mentioned to thee before and messengers We have not mentioned to thee.” (4:164)

That is not all. Belief in the prophets of other nations is one of the fundamental principles of Islām. One of the three chief articles of the faith of a Muslim, as stated at the very commencement of the Holy Qur’ān, is:

“And who believe in that which has been revealed to thee and that which was revealed before thee.” (2:4)

The Qur’ān thus lays down the basis of a brotherhood of the whole human race to which no other heavenly book has made any approach. That God is Lord of all the nations of the world is not here a dry dogma; it is a living principle, not only recognizing that all nations were treated equally, physically as well as spiritually, but going further and making it an article of the faith of a Muslim that he believes in all the prophets, as he believes in the Prophet Muḥammad. Surely a universal religion upon which the whole human race could agree could go no further.

It should be borne in mind in reading the histories of the prophets as given in the Holy Qur’ān that the object is not to narrate history as such, but to bring out certain characteristics of the histories of different nations, to mention incidents which contain prophetic allusion to the Holy Prophet’s life, or to the future of Islām, and to comfort the Prophet with illustrations from previous sacred history that truth shall ultimately be established and that opposition shall entirely fail and be overthrown. The Qur’ān does not concern itself with the details of these histories, not even with the details of what messages a prophet delivered to his people or how he was received. It contents itself with the broad facts that every prophet delivered the message of Unity, invited people to obey God and to do good to fellow-men, and aimed at the moral betterment of the people to whom he was sent. It shows, by mentioning prophets of Israelite and non-Israelite nationality, that the cardinal principles of the religion of all the prophets were one and the same. The references in the earlier chapters are generally very brief. Whatever details there are belong to a period

when opposition to the Prophet was at its highest, and the object was, no doubt, to tell the opponents when they were at the height of their power that they could not escape their ultimate overthrow. Another point worth noting is that every prophet is spoken of as being sent to a single nation, with the exception of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, who is spoken of as being sent to all the nations of the world.

HISTORY OF THE PROPHETS

ADAM

The story of Adam as narrated in the Holy Qur'ān, is really the story of man as also the story of the superman, the prophet. It is really a picture of human nature. The Holy Qur'ān does not state when Adam was born or how he was born; it does not even state that he was the first man. The great Muslim divine, Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Bāqir, one of the twelve Shī'a Imāms, is reported to have said that "millions of Adams passed away before our father Adam." Ibn 'Arabī, the head of the Sūfīs, writes in his great work *The futuhāt*, that forty thousand years before our Adam there was another Adam.

Again, the Holy Qur'ān does not say how Adam was made. It does not accept the Bible theory of his creation. It does say, indeed, that he was made from dust, but then it speaks of every son of man being created from dust as well:

"O people! if you are in doubt about the Resurrection, then surely We created you from dust, then from a small life-germ, then from a clot, then from a lump of flesh..." (22:5)

"He it is Who created you from dust, then from a small life-germ, then from a clot, then He brings you forth as a child." (40:67)

Dust is the first stage of man's existence, and every man is made from it. How? The Holy Qur'ān explains itself:

"And certainly We created man of an extract of clay, then We made him a small life-germ in a firm resting-place." (23:12, 13)

"And He began the creation of man from dust. Then He made his progeny of an extract, or worthless water. Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit, and gave you ears and eyes and hearts." (32:7-9)

Thus man's creation from dust means his creation from an extract of dust, an extract which eventually appears as a life-germ, because from the earth comes the food which through several processes assumes the form of the life-germ. It is noteworthy that the Holy Qur'ān here speaks of the spirit of God being breathed into *every* man, and the spirit in this case is not the animal soul but the soul that enables a man to distinguish between right and wrong, or the human soul or reason, and hence it is that the statement is immediately followed by the words: "And made for you ears and eyes and hearts."

Nor does the Qur'ān accept the Bible statement that Eve was made from a rib of Adam.¹ It is no doubt stated in the Holy Book that God created people "from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind)" (4:1); but the meaning is evidently, *of the same kind* or *same essence*, for elsewhere we are told that mates or wives are created for all men from themselves—Ar. *anfus*, meaning *selves* or *kind*.

"And Allāh has made wives for you among yourselves." (16:72)

"And of His signs is this, that He created mates for you from yourselves that you might find quiet of mind in them, and He put between you love and compassion." (30:21)

The devil's opposition to Adam, which is the chief characteristic of Adam's story as given in the Holy Qur'ān, is mentioned in seven different places, *i.e.*, four times in early Makka revelations (38:71-85; 17:61-65; 18:50; 20:116-124); twice in the later Makka revelations (15:26-44; 7:11-25); and once in early Madīna revelation (2:30-39). To realize the true significance of the story, it is necessary to compare the various statements on the

1. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept : and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman and brought her unto the man" (Gen. 2:21, 22).

same or similar points. The first point is God's declaration of His will to create Adam or man:

"When thy Lord said to the angels: Surely I am going to create a mortal from dust." (38:71)

"And when thy Lord said to the angels: I am going to create a mortal of sounding clay, of black mud fashioned into shape." (15:28)

"And when thy Lord said to the angels, I am going to place a ruler in the earth." (2:30)

Now on the first two occasions, it is simply a mortal whose creation is spoken of, while on the third occasion it is one who rules in the earth. The first two descriptions in their generality, and the third in particular, apply to all men and not to Adam alone, and hence the story of every man. Man's being a ruler refers to the high place he was intended to occupy on earth, ruling not only the animal creation, but the forces of nature, as the Qur'ān repeatedly states:

"Allāh is He Who made subservient to you the sea that the ships may glide therein by His command... And He has made subservient to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all, from Himself." (45:12, 13)

It is only on one occasion that attention is drawn to the darker side of the picture of humanity:

"Wilt thou place in it such as make mischief in it and shed blood?" (2:30)

But the brighter side of that picture is presented in varying colours. In the earlier revelation we have: "So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit" (38:72; 15:29), a description expressly applied to every human being in 32:8, 9.² Later, man's vast capability to rule is pointed out in the words:

2. "Then He made his progeny of an extract, of worthless water. Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit".

“And He taught Adam all the names” (2:31), a knowledge which is not given even to the angels (2:32).

In knowledge really lies the power of man and hence it is that the command to the angels to make obeisance to Adam follows immediately the mention of his completion on the first two occasions and the giving of knowledge to him on the third. The command to angels to make obeisance to Adam, shows that man is placed above even the angels, and below God occupies the highest place on earth. But it is the capacity of acquiring knowledge that is given to him, and he acquires knowledge by slow degrees through his efforts; the light of the Divine spirit is within him, and by the use of that light he can rise to higher eminences. And just as in the physical world the acquirement of knowledge opens out new fields of advancement before him, so in the spiritual world the knowledge of things Divine opens out before him a higher life., a full manifestation of which begins with what is called the Resurrection day.

With the angels making obeisance to Adam on all seven occasions is mentioned the refusal of Iblīs to submit. Iblīs is the proper name of the devil, and in 18:50 he is plainly spoken of as being of the jinn or invisible beings of a lower order, in contrast with the angels or invisible beings of a higher order.³ These invisible beings are connected with the spiritual life of man, the angel urging him to good, and the devil stirring up the baser passions in him and thus retarding his advancement to the higher life; see 50:21, where the impeller to evil or the devil is called a driver and the caller to good, or the angel, is called witness. Hence when it is stated that the devil refused to submit to Adam or man, it is meant that man's baser passions which the devil excites are really a hindrance in his progress, and that to attain to a higher life it is necessary that the devil should be made to submit or that the baser passions in man must be subdued. That such is the real

3. "And when We said to the angels : Make submission to Adam, they submitted except Iblīs. He was of the jinn, so he transgressed the commandment of his Lord".

significance was explained by the Holy Prophet himself when on being questioned if he too had a devil as every other human being had, replied in the affirmative and added: "But Allāh has helped me against him so that he is submissive." The devil and his progeny are, therefore, called a man's enemy (18:50), with whom he is required to carry on a struggle until the enemy submits to him.

The next point mentioned is that Adam and his wife are at first placed in a garden (20:117; 7:19; 2:35), a description of which is thus given in one place: "Thou art not hungry therein nor naked, and that thou art not thirsty therein nor exposed to the sun's heat" (20:118, 119). On another occasion we are told that Adam and his wife were told, "and eat from it a plenteous (food) wherever you wish," but a warning was added: "And approach not this tree, lest you be of the unjust" (2:35; 7:19). In order to tempt Adam, "the devil made an evil suggestion to them." (7:20; 20:120)

It is noteworthy that in all the details of this story the Holy Qur'ān does not accept the Bible statements. It is not the serpent "more subtil than any beast of the field," which comes and speaks to Eve and leads her astray, she in her turn leading astray man. The serpent finds no mention at all. It is the devil who makes and evil suggestion to Adam or to both Adam and Eve, as he makes only evil suggestions to every son and daughter of Adam. By the devil's evil suggestion man is made to think that the forbidden tree "is the tree of immortality and a kingdom which decays not" (20:120). And the suggestion is that, "your Lord has forbidden you this tree, lest you become angels or become of the immortals" (7:20). Thus "he caused them to fall by deceit" (7:22), and they both ate of the tree. And what were the consequences? "So they both ate of it, then their evil inclinations became manifest to them, and they began to cover themselves with leaves of the garden." (20:121; 7:22)

All this clearly shows that the garden is not an earthly garden, but stands for a state of contentment and rest in which there is no struggle. The tree which is not to be approached is always called "This tree," as if it had been just mentioned or as if it were a tree

too well-known to need any description. This in itself gives and indication that it is the well-known *tree of evil*, for both good and evil are compared to two trees in 14:24-25 and elsewhere. This is further corroborated by the devil's description of it as "the tree of immortality" (20:120), by which he deceived man (7:22), showing that it is really the tree which brings death, *i.e.*, the tree of evil.

Another clue to the nature of this tree is afforded by 7:22 and 20:121, where the result of the eating of this tree is pointed out—*their evil inclinations became manifest to them*. It is clearly the consciousness that man has done something wrong, something unworthy of himself. The attempt "to cover themselves with the leaves of the garden" (7:22; 20:121) is the desire to make up by human effort the evil consequences of the fault committed. In fact, all this is placed beyond all doubt when the Qur'ān goes on to speak immediately afterwards of two kinds of clothing, the external clothing "to cover your shame and clothing for beauty," and the spiritual clothing, "clothing that guards against evil—that is the best" (7:26); and in the same strain it goes on to generalize:

"O children of Adam, Let not the devil seduce you, as he expelled your parents from the garden, pulling off from them their clothing that he might show them their shame. He surely sees you, he as well as his host, from whence you see them not. Surely, We have made the devils to be the friends of those who believe not." (7:27)

The very next verse then speaks of the indecencies committed by the unbelievers, and thus it becomes too clear to need further comment that it is the tree of evil that the Holy Qur'ān speaks of as *this tree*. And when this is established, the conclusion is evident that the garden spoken of is a spiritual garden, garden of contentment, as already pointed out. Its description as a garden where man feels no hunger (20:118), and at the same time eats from it a plenteous food (2:35), leads to the same conclusion. That the Qur'ān is here speaking allegorically of spiritual truths is also clear from 20:124:

“And whoever turns away from My Reminder, for him is surely a straitened life, and We shall raise him up blind on the day of Resurrection.”

The straitened life here clearly indicates the life spiritual. As a result of prompting man to evil, the devil, the inciter of the lower passions in man, is expelled from the garden for ever:

“Go forth from hence! Surely thou art driven away: and surely My curse in on thee to the day of Judgement.” (38:77, 78; 15:34, 35)

Adam, who disobeys the Divine commandment through forgetfulness and not intentionally (20:115),⁴ is also expelled from the garden, but only for a while, to carry on a struggle with the devil, that is his enemy:

“Go forth, some of you are the enemies of others. And there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time.” (2:36)

“Go forth herefrom both—all (of you)—one of you (is) enemy to another.” (20:123)

The state of struggle with the devil was destined to set man on the way to regain the garden. Man who is gifted with the power even to rule the angels and who could, therefore, make the devil to submit to himself, is expelled from the garden to make the necessary struggle, and through that struggle, helped by the Divine light of revelation, to regain the garden permanently, never more to be expelled from it. He turns to God and, finding help from that source of strength, conquers the devil:

“They said: Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves; and if Thou forgive us not, and have (not) mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers.” (7:23)

“Then Adam received (revealed) words from his Lord, and He turned to him (mercifully).” (2:37)

4. And certainly We gave a commandment to Adam before, but he forgot; and We found in him no resolve (to disobey)."

“Then his Lord chose him, so He turned to him (mercifully) and guided (him).” (20:122)

And if this is true of Adam in particular, it is also true of man generally. Communion with the Divine Being obtained through His revelation brings man to a state in which the devil is forever subdued, the state in which he has no more fear of the devil, nor does he commit evil so that he should grieve over it:

“Surely there will come to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.” (2:38)

“So there will surely come to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, he will not go astray nor be unhappy.” (20:123)

Anyone who considers carefully the details of this story, its manifestly allegorical nature, and the great purpose underlying it—that every man must carry on a struggle with his passions until he acquires the mastery over them—cannot for an instant entertain the idea that the Holy Qur’ān is in any way indebted to the Bible for the story of Adam. It unfolds a lesson which finds no place in the Bible, the greatest of all spiritual lessons—How to conquer evil, how to subdue the animal passions to be able to rise to the great spiritual heights for which man is created.

ENOCH

Among Adam’s descendants, Enoch is mentioned in the Holy Qur’ān under the name of Idrīs twice (19:56, 57; 21:85). On the first of these occasions it is stated:

“And mention Idrīs in the Book, surely he was a truthful man, a prophet.

“And We raised him to an elevated state.”

Under the influence of Jewish and Christian traditions, Enoch's being raised to an elevated state has been misinterpreted by some commentators as his being raised alive to heaven. According to the Bible:

"Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him."
(Gen. 5:24)

"God took him" perhaps meant no more than that he died, but tradition took a different view, and under the influence of that tradition, Paul wrote:

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found because God had translated him." (Heb. 11:5)

Reliable commentators of the Holy Qur'ān have, however, rejected the Christian tradition, and have held that the *raf'* of Idrīs or his being raised to an elevated state, only signifies his exaltation in rank and not his bodily translation to upper regions, which, according to one commentator, does not carry the least importance. Use of this word *raf* about Jesus Christ has led to a similar misunderstanding.

NOAH

In chronological order the history of Noah may be taken next. Though Noah is referred to in the Holy Qur'ān repeatedly, a detailed account of his preaching is contained in the short chapter entitled *Noah*, and devoted entirely to his life-work, one of the earliest Makka revelations, in 11:25-49, 26:105-121 and 54:8-15, another early revelation, other references being very brief. A few quotations are given below, as showing how strenuously Noah worked to establish the truth and how stubborn his people were in rejecting it, and how they were finally destroyed by a deluge:

“Surely We sent Noah to his people, saying: Warn thy people before there come upon them a painful chastisement.

He said: O my people, I am a plain warner to you:

That you should serve Allāh and keep your duty to Him and obey me...

He said: O my Lord, I have called my people night and day; but my call has only made them flee the more.

And whenever I have called them that Thou mayest forgive them, they thrust their fingers in their ears and cover themselves with their garments, and persist (in their evil ways) and are big with pride.

Then surely I have called to them aloud,

Then spoken to them in public and spoken to them in private,
So I have said, Ask forgiveness of your Lord, surely He is ever Forgiving:

He will send down upon you the rain, pouring in abundance,
And help you with wealth and sons, and make for you gardens,
and make for you rivers.

What is the matter with you that you hope not for greatness from Allāh.” (71:1-13)

“And certainly We sent Noah to his people: Surely I am a plain warner to you,

To serve none but Allāh. Verily I fear for you the chastisement of a painful day.

But the chiefs of his people who disbelieved said: We see thee not but a mortal like us and we see not that any follow thee but those who are the meanest of us at first thought. Nor do we see in you any superiority over us; nay, we deem you liars.

He said: O my people, see you if I have with me clear proof from my Lord, and He has granted me mercy from Himself and it has been made obscure to you. Can we compel you to (accept) it while you are averse to it?

And, O my people, I ask you not for wealth (in return) for it.”
(11:25-29)

The Bible is silent about Noah’s preachings to his people and his great struggle to bring about their reformation. It tells us only that there was wickedness in the whole of the earth while only “Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations,” and that God told Noah to make an ark for himself and his family as He was going to destroy the earth and all on it.

There is another marked difference in the story of Noah as related in the Qur’ān and as related in the Bible. According to the Bible, the deluge covered the whole earth and its result was destruction of all flesh on the surface of the earth:

“And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl and of cattle, and of beast, and of everything that creepeth upon the earth, and every man.” (Gen. 7:21)

According to the Holy Qur’ān, the deluge was a punishment only for the particular people who persisted in their evil ways and rejected the truth, who refused to bow before God. The Holy Book speaks again and again of Noah being sent to a particular people and only of their destruction by the deluge, because they not only would not give up their wicked ways but even planned to destroy the righteous:

“Noah said: My Lord, surely they disobey me and follow him whose wealth and children have increased him in naught but loss.

And they have planned a mighty plan...

And indeed they have led many astray. And increase Thou the wrongdoers in naught but perdition.

Because of their wrongs they were drowned, then made to enter Fire, so they found no helpers besides Allāh.” (71:21-25)

“My Lord, my people give me the lie. So judge Thou between me and them openly and, deliver me and the believers who are with me.

So We delivered him and those with him in the laden ark. Then We drowned the rest afterwards.” (26:117-120)

“But they rejected him, so We delivered him and those with him in the ark, and We made them rulers and drowned those who rejected Our messages.” (10:73)

Thus according to the Holy Qur’ān, the Divine purpose was the destruction of evil and injustice, not the destruction of flesh. It was only the unjust people who would not give up their evil ways and who planned to bring about the destruction of the preachers of righteousness that were destroyed. There is no mention at all in the Holy Qur’ān of the deluge covering the whole face of the earth.

Another difference is that while according to the Bible only Noah and his family were saved, according to the Qur’ān there were other people who believed in Noah, and they too were saved, as the above quotations show. That the aim was destruction of evil is further emphasized by speaking of a son of Noah who was among those who were drowned, because he too persisted in evil, but of this there is no mention in the Bible:

“... And Noah called out to his son, and he was aloof: O my son, embark with us and be not with the disbelievers... And a wave intervened between them, so he was among the drowned.” (11:42, 43)

There is thus this essential difference between the two stories. All the righteous are saved, not only Noah and his family, and all the wicked are destroyed, including even a member of Noah’s family, according to the Qur’ān.

The Bible also speaks of a son of Noah but the difference is remarkable. It makes Noah first drunken to such an extent that he became naked: “And he drank of the wine and was drunken and he was uncovered within his tent” (Gen 9:21). One of his sons, Ham, saw him in this condition, and when Noah awoke from his wine, he cursed Canaan, the son of Ham, and condemned him to be “a servant of servants” to his brethren. The story in all its details is entirely repugnant to moral laws. Canaan suffers for the fault of his father, but the fault was really Noah’s own. Moreover, it ascribes

the sin of getting drunk to a prophet of God. The story as narrated in the Holy Qur'ān has a moral purpose beneath it, but as related in the Bible it shocks the very sense of morality.

There is generally a misunderstanding about the origin of the deluge due to a wrong interpretation of word *tannūr* which occurs in the following verse:

“At length when Our command came and water gushed forth from the valley, We said: Carry in it two of all things, a pair, and thine own family—except those against whom the word has already gone forth—and those who believe.” (11:40)

The deluge was the result of an exceptionally heavy rain, a severe cloud-burst:

“Then We opened the gates of heaven with water pouring down, and made water to flow forth in the land in springs, so the water gathered together according to a measure already ordained.” (54:11-12)

It should also be noted that in the language of the Qur'ān, the words *all things* of which pairs were to be taken mean not all animals existing on the earth, to gather together which was a physical impossibility for Noah, but all things needed for the sustenance of those in the ark. The same words occur elsewhere:

“I found a woman ruling over them, and she has been given of *everything*.” (27:23)

Here too by *all things* are meant all things needed for her pomp and glory.

A very short notice of Noah contained in 29:14, 15, adds that he remained among his people for 950 years, which may refer either to his own span of life or to the duration of his law. In 66:10, his wife is mentioned along with Lot's wife, and it is stated that both of them acted treacherously towards their righteous husbands. Further, according to the Holy Qur'ān, Noah's ark was left as a sign for the coming generations, while there is no such mention in the Bible.

“And We bore him on that which was made of planks and nails, floating on, before Our eyes—a reward for him who was denied. And certainly We left it as a sign, but is there any that will mind?” (54:13-15)

PROPHETS NOT MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE

The history of Noah in the Holy Qur’ān is generally followed, when a chronological order is observed, by the history of the prophet Hūd, who was sent to the tribe of ‘Ād. Hūd and some other prophets spoken of in the Holy Qur’ān find no mention in the Bible, and they are all dealt with in this chapter without keeping in view the chronological order of their appearance. The tribe of ‘Ād lived in the desert of al-Aḥqāf (46:21), extending from Oman to Hadramaut, in the south of Arabia. The tribe takes its name from ‘Ād, the grandson of Aram, the grandson of Noah, and is sometimes called the first ‘Ād (53:50), as distinguished from the tribe of Thamūd, which is called the second ‘Ād. It was a powerful tribe, as the inscriptions now discovered show, and probably had spread far and wide. The prophet Hūd is not mentioned in the Bible, nor the prophet Ṣāliḥ, who was sent to the tribe of Thamūd, which is often mentioned along with ‘Ād, though territorially separated from it. Thamūd lived in al-Ḥijr (15:80), to the north of Madīna. The only important things mentioned about ‘Ād are that they were successors of Noah’s people (7:69), that they made lofty building—the words thus translated may also signify that they were men of tall statures—being the most powerful nation of their day (89:7, 8), “the like of which were not created in other cities”, and that they were destroyed by a strong wind (69:6, 7; 54:19).

About Thamūd we are told that they hewed out houses in the mountains (7:74), traces of these rock habitations being still met

with in the Holy Prophet's time (27:52), and that they were destroyed by an earthquake (7:78). There is mention of a she-camel which was given to them as a sign, they being warned that if they slew the she-camel, punishment would overtake them. The many legends about this she-camel are not met with in the Qur'ān, and the facts seem to be that they had laid a plan for the murder of their Prophet (27:48, 49), and the slaying of the she-camel was a sign that they were about to execute their final plan against Ṣāliḥ himself.

A few quotations relating to the preaching of these prophets are given below to show that every prophet whom God sent aimed at establishing righteousness in the earth, and his opponents were destroyed because of their wickedness:

“And to ‘Ād (We sent) their brother Hūd. He said: O my people, serve Allāh, you have no god other than Him. Will you not then guard against evil?... I deliver to you the messages of my Lord and I am a faithful adviser to you... And remember when He made you successors after Noah's people and increased you in excellence of make. So remember the bounties of Allāh, that you may be successful.” (7:65-69)

“And to Thamūd We sent their brother Ṣāliḥ. He said: O my people, serve Allāh, you have no god other than Him. Clear proof has indeed come to you from your Lord... And remember when He made you successors after ‘Ād and settled you in the land—you make mansions on its plains and hew out houses in the mountains. So remember Allāh's bounties and act not corruptly in the land, making mischief.” (7:73, 74)

These are not the only prophets mentioned in the Qur'ān about whom the Bible is silent. The Qur'ān speaks of a prophet of the name of Luqmān (31:13), who seems to have been an Ethiopian. His teachings are quoted as specially laying stress on humility and meekness to point out that the teaching of humility is not the monopoly of one prophet or one nation:

“And when Luqmān said to his son, while he admonished him: O my son, ascribe no partner to Allāh... O my son, even if it

be the weight of a grain of mustard-seed, even though it be in a rock or in the heaven or in the earth, Allāh will bring it forth... O my son, keep up prayer and enjoin the good and forbid evil, and bear patiently that which befalls thee. Surely this is an affair of great resolution. And turn not thy face away from people in contempt, nor go about in the land exultingly.” (31:13-18)

It also speaks of a non-Israelite prophet who was contemporaneous with Moses, and to whom Moses went in search of knowledge. He is spoken of thus:

“Then they found one of Our servants whom We had granted mercy from Us and whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves.” (18:65)

This prophet is spoken of as living at the junction of the two Niles (18:60), *i.e.*, at Khartūm. This is to show that every nation had a prophet.

Again the Holy Qur’ān speaks of Dhu-l-Qarnain in terms showing that he too was a prophet (18:83-98). The word *Dhu-l-Qarnain* literally means the *two-horned one*, and he is so called in reference to the two-horned ram of Daniel’s vision (Dan. 8:3), which that prophet interpreted as the kingdoms of Media and Persia, which were combined into a single kingdom under one ruler, Cyrus who is erroneously called Darius in the Bible (Encyclopaedia Biblica and Jewish Encyclopaedia, Art. *Darius*). That the two-horned ram of Daniel’s vision is the king of Media and Persia is made plain in Daniel’s book, where the interpretation of the dream is given in the following words:

“The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia.” (Dan. 8:20)

According to the Holy Qur’ān, Dhu-l-Qarnain undertook three journeys, evidently with the object of strengthening the frontiers of his empire: “So he followed a course. Until, when he reached the setting-place of the sun, he found it going down into a black sea... Then he followed (another) course. Until when he reached (a place) between the two mountains, he found on that side of them

a people who could hardly understand a word" (18:85-93). Here he was asked to build a barrier against the attacks of the tribes called Gog and Magog. The two mountains are the mountains of Armenia and Azarbaijan; the people living beyond them spoke a different language and could not understand the Iranian language. According to the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*: "Darius was the organizer of the Persian empire. His conquests served to round out the boundaries of his realm in Armenia, the Caucasus, and India, and along the Turanian steppes and the high lands of Central Asia." And further: "Darius in his inscriptions appears as a fervent believer in the true religion of Zoroaster."

According to the Holy Qur'ān, he was granted the gift of prophecy, for after making the great barrier which stopped the onrushes of Gog and Magog,⁵ he says: "This is a mercy from my Lord, but when the promise of my Lord comes to pass, He will crumble it, and the promise of my Lord is ever true" (18:98). This prophecy is immediately followed by a mention of the latter-day conflicts of Gog and Magog which were to follow their predominance in the world. Thus it is added: "And on that day We shall let some of them surge against others" (18:99). The prevalence of Gog and Magog over the whole world is spoken of in the following words elsewhere: "Until when Gog and Magog are let loose and they sally forth from every elevated place" (21:96). The words signify their taking possession of every position of advantage and every place of eminence; in other words, their overcoming the whole world.

5. Gog and Magog are Biblical names for the Slav and Teutonic races.

ABRAHAM

Abraham and Moses are the two prophets whose histories are given the greatest prominence in the Holy Qur'ān, Abraham being spoken of over 40 times and Moses nearly 50 times. The importance of Abraham was due to the fact that he was accepted by all the three different communities that resided in Arabia, the Jews, the Christians, and the idolaters, and was thus in a way the link which united them, notwithstanding the divergence of their religious views. It is for this reason that they are again and again invited to the religion of Abraham:

“And they say: Be Jews or Christians, you will be on the right course. Say: Nay, (we follow) the religion of Abraham, the upright one, and he was not one of the polytheists.” (2:135)

“And who is better in religion than he who submits himself entirely to Allāh while doing good (to others) and follows the faith of Abraham, the upright one?” (4:125)

“Say: As for me, my Lord has guided me to the right path—a right religion, the faith of Abraham, the upright one, and he was not of the polytheists.” (6:161)

And notwithstanding that the righteousness of Abraham was an established fact with these three communities, Abraham's religion was not the religion of any of them:

“Abraham was not a Jew nor a Christian, but he was (an) upright (man), a Muslim; and he was not one of the polytheists.” (3:67)

The three communities are in fact told to find out the common element of the three religions, for only that could be the religion of Abraham. This was the existence of the One Supreme God. The word *hanīf*, which I have translated *upright*, is most frequently used in connection with Abraham. The root-word, *hanf* means *inclining*, or *declining*, and hence *hanīf* means *one inclining to a*

right state, according to Rāghib, the best authority on the lexicology of the Holy Qur'ān. Wherever used, it seems to indicate a firmness in sticking to the right state as opposed to an inclining to polytheism on the part of the Jews and the Christians.

Abraham appears in the Holy Qur'ān as the most forceful preacher against idolatry and polytheism of every kind, and his zeal to rid humanity of this grossest of superstitions gives us really a picture of the Holy Prophet's mind. In fact, every prophet in the Holy Qur'ān represents a particular phase of the character of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, and Abraham stands for the iconoclastic tendency on the one hand and entire submission to God on the other. His preaching against idolatry is referred to in 6:74; 19:42-48; 21:52-65; 26:69-84; 29:16, 17; 37:85-96; 43:26, 27. He also preaches against the worship of heavenly bodies; see 6:74-82; 37:88, 89. But he went a step further and broke the idols, and this he did after he had plainly told his people that he would make clear to them the helplessness of their supposed deities:

“And by Allāh! I will certainly plan against your idols after you go away, turning your backs. So he broke them into pieces, except the chief of them, that haply they may return to it.” (21:57, 58)

The same incident is also referred to earlier, in 37:91-96, where Abraham is spoken of as having broken them secretly, *i.e.*, in the absence of their worshippers. As a result of this, opposition to Abraham took a bitter turn but God made all plans against him fruitless:

“They said: Burn him, and help your gods, if you are going to do (anything). We said: O fire, be a coolness and peace for Abraham: And they intended a plan against him, but We made them the greater losers. And We delivered him and Lot” (21:68-71). “So naught was the answer of his people except that they said: Slay him or burn him! But Allāh delivered him from the fire.” (29:24)

The opponents had a plan to burn him, but that plan failed. Whether Abraham was actually cast into fire is not stated.

The breaking of the idols by Abraham was no doubt a prophecy that the idols which now polluted the House sanctified by Abraham would ultimately be broken by the Holy Prophet, and so it happened after the conquest of Makka. Abraham's zeal for the establishment of the Unity of God is also displayed by his leaving enduring traditions among the Arabs that he was a preacher of unity: "And he made it a word to continue in his posterity that they might return" (43:28), where *it* refers to the worship of one God.

The second phase of Abraham's character in which he represents the Holy Prophet is his entire submission to God. Though every prophet, undoubtedly submitted to God, yet particular stress is laid upon Abraham's submission, see 2:124, 131; 3:67; 4:125; 16:120; 37:103. It was his complete submission to God that made him a guide for all people:

"And when his Lord tried Abraham with certain commands he fulfilled them. He said: Surely I will make thee a leader of men." (2:124)

Abraham's desire was that his offspring should also be raised to the dignity of leadership, but he was told that "the covenant of God does not include the unjust." (2:124)

Abraham's submission to God was so perfect that when he received a commandment to sacrifice his only son Ishmael, he did not hesitate a minute though "when they both submitted and he had thrown him down upon his forehead," the voice of God came to him that he had "fulfilled the vision" (37:103-105), in obedience to which he was going to sacrifice his son, and that the sacrifice of a goat should commemorate the occasion (37:107), as a sign that the animal in man was to be sacrificed to the divine in him. Thus the incident affords an illustration of the complete submission of Abraham to God, and contains, no doubt, a prophetic reference to the complete submission of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad and his followers, who showed their willingness to lay down their own lives and the lives of those dearest to them to defend the truth.

It may be remarked here that the Holy Qur'ān speaks of Ishmael as being the son whom Abraham was ordered to sacrifice, as it speaks of the good news of Isaac's birth being given to Abraham after the incident of the sacrifice (37:112). This contradicts the Bible statement, which speaks of Isaac as being the son who was ordered to be sacrificed. But the Bible contradicts itself when it says: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac" (Gen. 22:2). He is again called "thine only son" in vv. 12 and 16. Now Isaac could not, by any stretch of imagination, be called an "only son," as Ishmael was much older than Isaac. Only Ishmael could be called an only son before Isaac's birth, and, therefore, the text has no doubt been altered in favour of Isaac. Moreover, both the Bible and the Holy Qur'ān agree that a ram was sacrificed instead of the lad, but the sacrifice of a ram is commemorated among Ishmael's descendants, not among Isaac's, and this is additional testimony to the truth of what the Qur'ān states.

Another important point relating to Abraham is his connection and that of Ishmael with the Ka'ba, the sacred house at Makka. The Qur'ān does not leave the least doubt about it. It was here that Abraham had left Ishmael, not in the wilderness of Beersheba as stated in the Bible. This is shown by Abraham's prayer as referred to in the Holy Qur'ān:

"Our Lord, I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley unproductive of fruit near Thy Sacred House, our Lord, that they may keep up prayer." (14:37)

From this, as also from a saying of the Holy Prophet, it further appears that Abraham had left Ishmael in Arabia in accordance with a Divine commandment, not at the instigation of his wife Sarah, as the Bible would have it (Gen. 21:10). In fact, it was all done in accordance with a Divine scheme, so that "the stone" which the builders rejected; should become "the head of the corner" (Matt. 21:42; Ps. 118:22). Ishmael was that stone, for whereas from the descendants of Israel came numerous prophets, from the descendants of him who was cast into the wilderness, and whom the Israelites began to hate though he was their brother, came the last of the prophets who became the head of the corner.

The strong connection of Abraham and Ishmael with the Ka'ba is thus voiced in the Holy Qur'ān: "When Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the house: our Lord, accept from us" (2:127). From this it appears that Abraham and Ishmael rebuilt the Ka'ba. That it was there already is shown by 14:37, as also by 3:96 which calls it "the first house appointed for men." Abraham is also stated to have prayed for Makka to be made the spiritual centre of the world: "My Lord, make this city secure, and save me and my sons from worshipping idols" (14:35; 2:126). And Abraham and Ishmael prayed for the raising up of a prophet from among their descendants:

"Our Lord, and make us both submissive to Thee, and (raise) from our offspring, a nation submissive to Thee, and show us our ways of devotion and turn to us (mercifully); surely Thou art the Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful. Our Lord, and raise up in them a Messenger from among them who shall recite to them Thy messages and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them. Surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise." (2:128, 129)

It is in reference to this prayer that the Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "I am the prayer of my father Abraham." The prayer for "a nation submitting to Thee" or a Muslim nation, as contained in 2:128, was clearly prophetic at the time of its revelation, for the circumstances then were against such a nation coming into existence, and the few scattered Muslims against overwhelming numbers of opponents who were bent upon their extermination, could not be called a *nation*.

Another trait of Abraham's character in which he represents the Holy Prophet is that he was very lenient towards his foes, so much so that he pleaded for Lot's people to be saved, though he knew that they were transgressors (11:74-76). His prayer contains the memorable words: "So whoever follows me, he is surely of me; and whoever disobeys me, Thou surely art Forgiving, Merciful" (14:36). He thus invoked Divine mercy even for his enemies, and this notwithstanding that he had to sever connection with these opponents: "We are clear of you and of that which you serve

besides Allāh. We disbelieve in you and there has arisen enmity and hatred between us and you forever until you believe in Allāh alone" (60:4). Exactly in the same manner was the Holy Prophet compelled to sever his connection with the unbelievers; yet, in his hour of triumph when all those enemies who had left no stone unturned to annihilate the Muslims were at his mercy, he forgave them all. On another occasion when the Prophet was asked to pray for the destruction of his enemies when he had received severe injuries in the battle of Uḥud, he raised his hands and prayed thus: "O Allāh! Forgive my people, for they do not know."

LOT

Lot was contemporaneous with Abraham, according to the Qur'ān as well as the Bible, but while the former recognizes him as a prophet, the latter does not. He is however considered as a righteous servant of God and it was on account of his righteousness that he was saved from the punishment which overtook Sodom and Gomorrah. In 2 Pet. 2:7, 8, he is called just Lot whose soul was vexed with the filthy deeds of the Sodomites. Gen. 19:30-38 which speaks of Lot's incestuous intercourse with his daughters in a state of intoxication is, however, a clear denial of his righteousness and shows that the Bible record is not trustworthy in this matter. The Holy Qur'ān does not accept this story and plainly speaks of Lot as one of the prophets of God on several occasions:

"And (We sent) Lot when he said to his people: Surely you are guilty of an abomination which none of the nations has done before you. Do you come to males and commit robbery on the highway, and evil deeds in your assemblies." (29:28, 29)

"The people of Lot gave the lie to the messengers. When their brother Lot said to them: Will you not guard against evil? Surely I am a faithful messenger to you." (26:160-162)

The punishment which overtook Lot's people, though sometimes called simply a rain, is plainly stated to be a rain of stones (11:82; 15:74). In 15:73, it is called a rumbling, and thus it is shown clearly that it was an earthquake, and hence the place is said to have been "turned upside down." (15:74)

As regards Lot's wife, the Holy Qur'ān simply says that she was destroyed along with the Sodomites as she did not go with Lot (7:83), and does not accept the Bible statement that she was turned into a pillar of salt.

ISHMAEL

Ishmael is often mentioned along with his father Abraham, particularly in connection with the Ka'ba, and as such he has been repeatedly referred to in the chapter on Abraham. Abraham prayed for a son after being delivered from the hands of his enemies. This prayer and its acceptance are spoken of in the following words:

"My Lord, grant me a doer of good deeds. So We gave him the good news of a forbearing son." (37:100, 101)

It has already been shown in the chapter on Abraham that it was Ishmael whom Abraham was commanded to sacrifice. The Holy Qur'ān speaks of this incident in the following words:

"But when he (Ishmael) became of (age to) work with him (Abraham), he said: O my son, I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice thee: so consider what thou seest. He said: O my father, do as thou art commanded; if Allāh please, thou wilt find me patient. So when they both submitted and he had thrown him down upon his forehead. And We called out to him saying, O Abraham, Thou hast indeed fulfilled the vision. Thus do We reward the doers of good. Surely this is a manifest trial. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice. And We granted him among the later generations (the salutation)." (37:102-108)

He is often spoken of as one of the prophets in the Holy Qur'ān. Nothing is said about the people to whom he was sent, but a report speaks of him as having been sent to the people of Yemen. Besides what has been stated of him above, he is spoken of in words of praise on many occasions. Thus in one place:

“And mention Ishmael in the Book. Surely he was truthful in promise, and he was a messenger, a prophet. And he enjoined on his people prayer and almsgiving, and was one in whom his Lord was well pleased.” (19:54, 55)

The Bible on the other hand does not speak of him as a prophet. The text may have been altered in this matter on account of the later Jewish prejudice which grew up against Ishmael. The covenant which the Bible speaks of was made, not with Israel but with Abraham and therefore included both Ishmael and Isaac. Nay, the covenant was made with Ishmael in exactly the same terms as with Abraham. Abraham was told:

“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing.” (Gen. 12:2, 3)

And again:

“And I will make thee exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of thee and kings shall come out of thee.” (Gen. 17:6)

Exactly the same promise was given regarding Ishmael when Abraham prayed to God that Ishmael might lead a perfect life—“that Ishmael might live before Thee”:

“And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.” (Gen. 17:20)

ISAAC AND JACOB

Of Abraham's sons, Isaac is accepted as a prophet. He is mentioned by name about a dozen times but no details about him are given. Abraham received the good news of his birth, after that of Ishmael as contained in 37:101:

"And We gave him the good news of Isaac, a prophet, a righteous one." (37:112)

Isaac's son Jacob is also mentioned several times in greater detail as one of the prophets. He is particularly spoken of as laying special stress on submission to the will of God:

"And the same did Abraham enjoin on his sons, and (so did) Jacob: O my sons, surely Allāh has chosen for you (this) religion, so die not unless you are submitting ones. Or were you witnesses when death visited Jacob, when he said to his sons: What will you serve after me? They said: We will serve thy God and the God of thy fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, one God only, and to Him do we submit." (2:132, 133)

Jacob is frequently spoken of in the story of Joseph, his son, for which see the next chapter. Only once he is mentioned by his name Israel (3:93), though his descendants are frequently spoken of as *Banū Isrāīl* or the Children of Israel.

JOSEPH

A whole chapter, the 12th chapter entitled *Joseph*, is devoted to the life-story of Joseph. It gives a continuous account of the history of Joseph, the first three verses and the concluding section both pointing to the purpose which underlies the story. It is not, in fact, a mere narrative but a prophetic statement of the dealings of the

Prophet's enemies towards him and his dealings with them. That the plans of Joseph's brothers to get rid of him and his magnanimous treatment of them contained a prophecy relating to the murderous plans of the Prophet's enemies and his flight to Madīna and his ultimate triumph over them and his generous treatment towards them is made clear by the following incident. The Prophet is related to have taken hold of the two sides of the gate of the Ka'ba on the day of the conquest of Makka, and he said to the Quraish who had been guilty of the most cruel of crimes against him and his followers: "How do you think I should treat you"? They said, "We hope for good, a noble brother and the son of a noble brother." Then he said: "I say as my brother Joseph said: No reproof be against you this day." The concluding words are the words of Joseph as related in 12:92, and are not met with in the Bible.

Joseph's story as related in the Holy Qur'ān starts with his vision: "I saw eleven stars and the sun and the moon—I saw them making obeisance to me" (12:4). In the Bible narrative, Jacob rebukes Joseph on account of this dream, saying: "What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" (Gen. 37:10). According to the Holy Qur'ān, Jacob saw Joseph's future greatness in this vision and said: "And thus will thy Lord choose thee and teach thee the interpretation of sayings, and make His favour complete to thee and to the children of Jacob" (12:6). Later on when he was cast into a pit by his brethren, Joseph, according to the Qur'ān narrative, received a Divine revelation: "Thou wilt certainly inform them of this affair of theirs while they perceive not" (12:15). It finds no place in the Bible narrative, and there is thus this essential difference between the two versions. The Bible narrates it as a simple story; the Qur'ān gives prominence to the spiritual element which alone can justify its record in a book meant for the spiritual guidance of man. The Qur'ān narrates the fact which the Bible omits that Joseph received a Divine revelation just at the time when his life had apparently come to an end that he will one day be the master of his present oppressors. It is this

circumstance in a prophet's life which enables him to face all distresses and difficulties, the deep conviction of the ultimate triumph of truth which is produced by revelation from on high.

The Bible narrative thus divests the story of its real beauty. When Joseph's brethren came to Jacob with false blood on his shirt, Jacob doubted their sincerity. He said: "Nay, your souls have made a matter light for you. So patience is goodly. And Allāh is He Whose help is sought against what you describe." (12:18)

Not so according to the Bible:

"And he knew and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces." (Gen. 37:33)

The Bible represents Jacob as an ordinary mortal, while the Holy Qur'ān represents him as a prophet. The former makes him grieve as an ordinary mortal for the loss of a beloved son: "And Jacob rent his clothes and put sackcloth upon his loins" (Gen. 37:34). The latter shows that he had from the first a hope. Throughout the Qur'ān narrative, Jacob's hope is the bright ray without which the story, as in the Bible, is a gloomy narrative devoid of all spiritual value. But there are traces left still in the Bible narrative which show that the account as now met with in Genesis does not truly depict the character of Jacob. He rebukes Joseph for his dream, but at the same time "observed the saying" (Gen. 37:11), which shows that he was convinced of its truth. The Quranic narrative thus not only fits in with prophetic character of Jacob but also shows that wherever it contradicts the Bible, it removes in fact its inconsistencies.

Both narratives relate Joseph's being sold in Egypt, his being kept in Potiphar's house and the incident of Potiphar's wife. But here again there is nothing to compare with the purity of the language of the Qur'ān:

"And she in whose house he was, sought to seduce him and made fast the doors and said: Come. He said: Allāh forbid! Surely my Lord made good my abode. The wrong-doers never prosper." (12:23)

Compare this with Bible narrative (Gen. 39:7-12) in which the language used shows no trace of delicacy. Further, according to Qur'ān Joseph's character was cleared of the false charge on the spot:

“A witness of her own family bore witness: If his shirt is rent in front, she speaks the truth and he is one of the liars. And if his shirt is rent behind, she tells a lie and he is one of the truthful. So when he (Potiphar) saw his shirt rent behind, he said: Surely it is a device of you women. Your device is indeed great! O Joseph, Turn aside from this. And (O my wife), ask forgiveness for thy sin. Surely thou art one of the sinful.” (12:26-29)

The vindication of Joseph's character on this occasion, and the production of the evidence of the shirt, are not related in the Bible, but without it the episode of leaving the torn garment behind, which is narrated in the Bible too, becomes quite meaningless. It seems to be a clear omission. What follows this episode in the Qur'ān narrative shows that Joseph was not cast into prison for being guilty of having committed an outrage on his master's wife as against the Bible narrative. The Holy Qur'ān does not allow even an accusation of this nature to stand against a prophet. In fact, the vindication of Joseph's character is given this importance to lay stress on the purity of character of all prophets of God. It is also meant to be an evidence of our Prophet's purity of character in his youth.

The narrative then goes on to relate the incident of Joseph being cast into prison on some other pretext. There Joseph interprets the dreams of two fellow-prisoners, the King's butler and baker. There is again a difference here in the two narratives. Joseph, according to the Quranic narrative, is more anxious to reform the two fellow-prisoners, which is not mentioned in the Bible at all:

“Surely I have forsaken the religion of a people who believe not in Allāh, and are deniers of the Hereafter. And I follow the religion of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. It

beseems us not to associate aught with Allāh. This is by Allāh's grace upon us and on mankind, but most people give not thanks. O my two fellow-prisoners, are sundry lords better or Allāh, the One, the Supreme? You serve not besides Him but names which you have named... Judgment is only Allāh's. He has commanded that you serve none but Him. This is the right religion but most people know not." (12:37-40)

Joseph is at last set free and brought to the King to interpret his dream but he refuses to leave the prison until he has his innocence established beyond all doubt. The women bear evidence: "We knew of no evil on his part." And Potiphar's wife admitted: "Now has the truth become manifest. I sought to seduce him and he is surely of the truthful" (12:51). The Bible narrative is again silent on this point. The King's dream is then interpreted and Joseph is placed in authority over the treasures of the land but the Divine purpose is made clear:

"And thus did We give to Joseph power in the land—he had mastery in it wherever he liked. We bestow Our mercy on whom We please, and We waste not the reward of the doers of good. And certainly the reward of the Hereafter is better for those who believe and guard against evil." (12:56, 57)

In vain would one search the Bible narrative for such spiritual lessons. Then follows an account of the famine during which Joseph's brethren come to Egypt for buying provisions. Joseph recognizes them but they do not recognize him. They are asked to come again with Benjamin. Jacob gives them some instructions and the prophet in him is again brought to prominence: "Surely he was possessed of knowledge, because We had given him knowledge, but most people know not" (12:68). The Bible narrative is devoid of these inspiring thoughts.

Then follows the episode of the cup being placed in Benjamin's bag. According to the Bible narrative, Joseph himself commanded his steward to place it there:

"And he commanded the steward of his house, saying... put my cup, the silver cup in the sack's mouth of the youngest and his

corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.” (Gen. 44:1, 2)

According to the Qur’ān narrative, Joseph did not give any such command, nor was it Joseph’s cup but the King’s cup. Who placed it in the sack, is not stated; it was either the steward or somebody else, maybe one of Joseph’s brethren who did it by way of mischief. Anyhow Benjamin was kept in Egypt and Joseph’s brethren returned to their father and related to him the episode of the cup. Jacob blamed them in exactly the words in which he had blamed them when they had brought to him Joseph’s shirt with false blood on it: “Nay, your soul have contrived an affair for you, so patience is good,” (12:83). This incident, however, only gave him a renewed hope of meeting Joseph: “Maybe Allāh will bring them together to me. Surely He is the Knowing, the Wise” (12:83). The remembrance of Joseph brought tears to his eyes, and his sons blamed him for continuing to remember Joseph for so long after he had perished.⁶ But Jacob’s hopes grew greater still:

“He said: I complain of my grief and sorrow only to Allāh, and I know from Allāh what you know not:

“O my sons, go and inquire about Joseph and his brother, and despair not of Allāh’s mercy. Surely none despairs of Allāh’s mercy except the disbelieving people.” (12:86, 87)

This shows that Jacob had a true prophet’s faith in the Divine promise given to him about Joseph, and he knew by Divine revelation that Joseph was alive. These wonderful spiritual lessons are nowhere to be met with in the Bible narrative, while the Qur’ān narrative is full of them. This fact entirely changes the very nature of the dry Bible story of an old man losing a son and then finding him. In the Holy Qur’ān we have one spiritual lesson

6. The general impression that Jacob had lost his eyesight on account of weeping too much finds no support in the Holy Qur’ān.

The words which are wrongly translated as meaning *he lost his sight* only mean that *tears came to his eyes*.

following another giving comfort not only to Jacob but also to the Holy Prophet and his faithful followers. It was due to this that their trust in God was as solid as a rock, so that under no circumstances did they give way to despair. The difference in the two narratives may be briefly summed up as the difference between secular and sacred history, between a record of the past events and great spiritual lessons for the future.

The other aspect of Joseph's story has already been alluded to. In the story of Joseph is related the story of the Prophet himself. Such is the beginning: "Certainly in Joseph and his brethren there are signs for inquirers" (12:7). Such is also the end. After being raised to the highest dignity in the land, Joseph prays to God thus:

"My Lord, Thou hast given me of the kingdom and taught me of the interpretation of sayings. Originator of the heavens and the earth, Thou art my Friend in this world and the Hereafter. Make me die in submission and join me with the righteous." (12:101)

And then follow the memorable words:

"This is of the announcements relating to the unseen (which) We revealed to thee, and thou wast not with them when they resolved upon their affair, and they were devising plans." (12:102)

These were clearly the plans which the Prophet's enemies were now devising to put an end to his life, but he was told that their plans would fail, and they would at last come to him as Joseph's brethren came to Joseph, asking pardon for their cruelty to him and meeting with the magnanimous response of which history does not afford another instance:

"No reproof be against you this day. Allāh may forgive you and He is the most Merciful of those who show mercy." (12:92)

SHU'AIB

Among Abraham's descendants, and previous to Moses, is Shu'aib, who was sent to Midian, a city on the Red Sea. Shu'aib is generally considered to be the Arabic name for Jethro. He is also supposed to be the man whose daughter Moses married when he fled to Midian (28:27). He is mentioned four times in the Holy Qur'ān, and in his teaching special stress is laid on the giving of full measure and weight. Thrice he is spoken of as being sent to Midian (7:85; 11:84; 29:36), and once as being sent to the dwellers of the thicket, *aṣḥāb al-aika* (26:176). Whether they were the same as the people of Midian cannot be said; in all probability they are identical, as the preaching in this case too is against defaultation in measure and weight. The following quotation is sufficient to give an idea of his preaching:

“And to Midian (We sent) their brother Shu'aib. He said: O my people, Serve Allāh, you have no other god save Him. And give not short measure and weight. I see you in prosperity, and I fear for you the chastisement of an all-encompassing day:

And, O my people, give full measure and weight justly, and defraud not men of their things, and act not corruptly in the land, making mischief:

What remains with Allāh is better for you, if you are believers...

O my people, see you, if I have a clear proof from my Lord and He has given me a goodly sustenance from Himself... I desire nothing but reform, so far as I am able. And with none but Allāh is the direction of my affair to a right issue.” (11:84-88)

The people persisted in their evil ways and in their opposition to the prophet, and were ultimately destroyed by an earthquake (7:91).

MOSES

Moses is the most frequently mentioned of all the prophets spoken of in the Holy Qur'ān, and the details of his life are dwelt upon to a much greater extent than the details of any other prophet's life. He is, moreover, the prophet to whom reference is made earliest in the Holy Book, in the chapter entitled *al-Muzzammil*, which stands third in the chronological order. The reason for giving so much importance to his history is also mentioned in this verse.

“Surely We have sent to you a Messenger, a witness against you, as We sent a messenger to Pharaoh.” (73:15)

This verse points out the likeness of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad to Moses, a likeness which Moses himself had pointed out in Deut. (18:15, 18):

“The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken... I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and will put My words in his mouth.”

We are told twice that the promised prophet, the like of Moses, shall appear from among “their brethren.” The people addressed here are the Israelites, and, therefore, “their brethren” could only mean the Ishmaelites. And actually no Israelite prophet ever claimed to be the like of Moses. Up to the time of Jesus Christ we find the Israelites still awaiting the advent of the promised “like” of Moses, for John the Baptist was asked if he was Christ or Elias or *that Prophet* (Revised Version, *the Prophet*), the reference in the margin being given to Deut. 18:15, 18. Nor did Jesus Christ ever say that he was the like of Moses, and his apostles still awaited the fulfillment of that prophecy after Jesus' crucifixion: “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise unto you of your brethren like unto me” (Acts 3:22). It was only the revelation of the Holy Prophet, and it was one of the earliest,

which pointed out the fulfillment of the prophecy of Deut. 18:15,18 in the advent of a prophet like Moses. This claim is made plainer still in a later revelation: "Have you considered if it is from Allāh, and you disbelieve in it, and a witness from among the children of Israel has borne witness of one like him." (46:10)

The history of Moses begins with a revelation to his mother to cast the child into the river, where he is picked up by Pharaoh's people (20:38, 39; 28:7, 8), and brought up by Pharaoh (26:18). When grown up, he finds one day an Israelite being oppressed by an Egyptian and strikes the Egyptian with his fist in order to save the Israelite. The Egyptian is accidentally killed, and Moses, on being informed that he cannot expect any justice from the authorities, flies to Midian (28:14-21). There he meets Jethro, marries his daughter, and after ten years goes back to Egypt (28:22-29). On his way back, he is called to the office of a prophet (19:52; 20:11-14; 27:8, 9; 28:30; 79:15, 16), and sees in a visionary state that his staff has become a serpent and his hand is white (20:17-23; 27:10-12; 28:31, 32). He is commanded to go to Pharaoh and to demand the deliverance of the Israelites (7:103-105; 20:46-48; 26:15-17; 44:18). He asks for a helper, Aaron his brother (20:25-35; 26:12-14; 28:33, 34). Pharaoh has a discussion with him (20:47-55; 26:18-31). A secret believer from among Pharaoh's people argues on behalf of Moses (40:28-45). Pharaoh demands signs, and the two signs of the staff and the hand are shown (7:106-108; 26:32, 33; 79:20). Pharaoh calls to his aid the enchanters, whose tricks do not avail aught against Moses (7:113-126; 10:80-82; 20:60-73; 26:38-51), and they believe in him (7:120, 121; 20:70; 26:46-48). Moses then shows other signs (7:130, 133), nine in all (17:101). Every time that distress befalls Pharaoh he requests Moses to pray for its removal, promising to believe when it was removed, but fails to keep his promise (7:134, 135; 43:49, 50). Moses exhorts his people to patience and prayer (7:128; 10:84). He is ultimately commanded to leave Egypt and crosses the sea, while Pharaoh and his hosts are drowned (2:50; 7:136; 10:90; 20:78; 26:52-66). He then retires to the

mountain for forty days to receive the law (2:51; 7:142-145; 20:83, 84), and the Israelite leaders with him demand that God should be shown to them manifestly (2:55). Moses prays to God that He may show Himself to him (7:143). A severe earthquake overtakes Moses and his companions (7:143, 155), and they fall down in a state of swoon. Moses recovers (7:143) and prays for his companions (7:155), who are restored to their senses (2:55, 56). Moses is given the Torah (7:142-145), the book being revealed to him as books were revealed to other prophets (2:53; 6:91). On his return, he finds people worshipping the image of calf which they had made in his absence under the directions of one called Sāmīrī (2:51; 7:150; 20:86-90). Aaron had warned them of their error before the coming of Moses, but they did not give it up (20:90, 91). The image is burned and the ashes are scattered in the sea (20:97). Moses orders his people to slaughter a cow which they were unwilling to do and obeyed the order after much quibbling (2:67-71). His own people make false imputations against him (33:69; 61:5). He asks his people to march on the Holy Land but they refuse and are made to wander in the wilderness for forty years (5:21-26).

I have given some of the more important details of Moses' life. Many other details are met with which the reader can see for himself. It would be noted that there are here some very important differences with the Bible narrative; for instance, Moses is not shown to be guilty of the murder of the Egyptian, his death being only accidental. According to the Bible, Moses received the Torah in the form of tablets written by the hand of God, and the writing was writing of God, "graven upon the tablets." (Ex. 32:16) According to the Holy Qur'ān, the Torah was revealed to Moses in the same manner as books were revealed to other prophets and as the Qur'ān was revealed to Prophet Muḥammad: "Who revealed the Book which Moses brought?" (6:91); "We have revealed to thee as We sent revelation to Noah and the prophets after him... and to Moses Allāh addressed His word, speaking (to him)" (4:163, 164). Again, according to the Bible, Moses in his anger broke the

tablets on which the word of God was written (Ex. 32:19), and Ex. 34:1 describes how they were renewed, but the Qur'ān says that he only put them down and took them up again when his anger calmed (7:150, 154).

The importance attached to Moses' life-story is due to the fact of his likeness with the Holy Prophet Muḥammad. Moses was both a law giver and a nation-builder, and so was the Holy Prophet Muḥammad to be. These two characteristics are not to be met with in any other Israelite prophet, and it would be seen that the details given above, as well as the other details met with about Moses in the Holy Qur'ān, relate to one or other of these two characteristics, more to the latter than to the former. But in both these capacities, as a law-giver and as a nation-builder, the Holy Prophet Muḥammad had to work on an immensely wider scale than Moses. The law of Moses was meant for a particular race, the israelites, and even among them prophets appeared after Moses to meet the new needs and to effect the necessary alterations and abrogations; but the law given to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad was meant for the whole human race and was made perfect, as he was the prophet for all nations and all times, no prophet appearing after him. This difference is repeatedly brought out in the Holy Qur'ān; the following quotations serve only as an example:

“And We indeed gave to Moses the book and We made it a guide for the Children of Israel.” (32:23)

“Blessed is He Who sent down the Discrimination upon His servant that he might be a warner to the nations.” (25:1)

“And it is naught but a Reminder for the nations.” (68:52)

“This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour to you.” (5:3)

But though the law is made perfect in the Holy Qur'ān and no prophet appears after the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, yet to meet new needs door is always open to work out the principles enunciated in the Holy Book and to deduce new laws from them to meet the requirements of the times.

As a nation-builder, the work of Moses occupies a very prominent place in his own life-story as well as in the history of the world. It was the very first message with which he was entrusted: "Go ye both to Pharaoh and say, We are the messengers of the Lord of the worlds, that send with us the children of Israel" (26:16, 17). The law was given to him long afterwards. And the work was no doubt one of the greatest difficulty for the Israelites had been in a state of slavery to the Pharaohs of Egypt for about four centuries. But great and important as Moses' work was, it was very limited in comparison to the work with which the Holy Prophet Muhammad was entrusted. He had to build a nation on quite a new principle, a nation not united by any ties of blood, race, colour, or country, but united by a moral and spiritual outlook, united by a belief in the Unity of God and His all-pervading Lordship. Such was to be the Muslim nation in which the Arab and the non-Arab, the white and the black, the Semitic and the Aryan, were all to be on one level. The whole world was the country and the whole of humanity the race out of which this nation was to be formed. With this apparently impossible task the Prophet was entrusted, and single-handed in the face of all difficulties, he built up the foundations of the new nation within the short period of twenty years. An accomplishment like this cannot be placed to the credit of any other man in the history of the world.

AARON

Aaron is very often mentioned along with Moses. When Moses was called to the office of a prophet, and commanded to go to Pharaoh and warn him, he is related to have prayed to God thus:

"And give to me an aider from my family: Aaron, my brother; add to my strength by him, and make him share my task. So that we may glorify Thee much. And much remember Thee." (20:29-34)

And elsewhere:

“And my brother, Aaron, he is more eloquent in speech than I, so send him with me as a helper.” (28:34)

We are told that the Torah was given to both Moses and Aaron (37:117). The chief point in which the Holy Qur’ān makes a departure from the Bible is Aaron’s alleged making of a calf for the Israelites to worship (Ex. 32:2-5). The Qur’ān not only clears him of idol-making, but shows him as plainly warning the Israelites because of their worship of the calf: “And Aaron indeed had said to them before: O my people you are only tried by it, and surely your Lord is the Beneficent God, so follow me and obey my order.” (20:90)

DAVID

Among the prophets of the Mosaic dispensation, besides Jesus Christ, David and Solomon are given the greatest prominence, and the glory to which the Israelite kingdom arose under these prophet-kings is referred to on more occasions than one. In fact, all this is history containing prophecy of the greatness of Islām. The chapters containing such references are those which were revealed at Makka when opposition to the Prophet was at its highest and his cause seemed to be quite hopeless. The narration of this history was a comfort to the Muslims that the time was coming when all opposition to the Prophet would be brought to naught and Islām would shine forth in all her glory. The prominence given to the history of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ on the one hand, and to that of David and Solomon on the other, of whom the former stood for the spiritual greatness of the Mosaic dispensation and the latter for material greatness, was in fact a clear indication that the Holy prophet was destined to occupy both the position of a spiritual-teacher and a king. This is made clear by expressly calling the Prophet Muḥammad the like of Moses as already pointed out,

and again by likening the Muḥammadan dispensation to the Mosaic dispensation (24:55).

The longest notice of David is that contained in 38:17-26, which begins with his conquests and his kingdom:

“Bear patiently what they say, and remember Our servant David, the possessor of power. He ever turned (to Allāh).

Truly We made the mountains subject to him, glorifying (Allāh) at nightfall and sunrise.

And the birds gathered together. All were obedient to him.

And We strengthened his kingdom and We gave him wisdom and a clear judgment.” (38:17-20)

This account of the conquests and kingdom of David is preceded by an injunction to the Prophet to bear patiently what his opponents said and did, thus indicating that the state of helplessness and prosecution of Islām would come to an end and the Muslims would rise to similar greatness and glory. These verses while speaking of the physical conquests of David also allude to his spiritual conquests, because the mountains are spoken of as being subjected to declare Divine glory. The birds are mentioned as attendants of a victorious army. This is made clearer by what is said elsewhere:

“And certainly We gave David abundance from Us: O mountains, repeat praises with him, and the birds, and We made the iron pliant to him.

Make ample (coats of mail), and assign a time to the making of coats of mail and do ye good. Surely I am Seer of what you do.” (34:10, 11)

The mention of making iron pliant to him and of coats of mail shows clearly that on both occasions the reference is to battles with the enemy and the conquests following them.

Notwithstanding the vastness of his kingdom, David was told to bear up with his enemies and treat them leniently:

“And has the story of the adversaries come to thee? When they made an entry into the private chamber by ascending the walls—When they came upon David so he was afraid of them.” (38:21, 22)

Strangely enough, this account of his enemies’ planning against his life has been twisted by some less careful commentators under the influence of Jewish tradition and the Bible into the story that David committed adultery and that two angels came to remind him of the sin. The Qur’ān plainly calls the two intruders to be *khaṣm* or *enemies*, and speaks of them as finding access to his private chamber by *ascending over the walls*, and to suppose them to be angels is the height of absurdity. Caliph ‘Alī, when he heard the false story related about David, said: “Whoever shall relate the story of David as the story-tellers relate it, I will give him 160 stripes, and this is the punishment of those who falsely charge the prophets.” This incident is related by the great commentator, Rāzī, who also says: “Most of the learned and those who have searched for the truth among them declare this charge to be false and condemn it as a lie and as a mischievous story.” The Bible story that David committed adultery is thus rejected by Islām as a false charge against a prophet of God. On the other hand, the Holy Qur’ān speaks of David in terms of highest praise: Surely he had a nearness to Us and an excellent resort (38:25).

The only other important point related about David is his slaying of Goliath (2:251), which occurs in a Madīna revelation, and here, too, it is added that “Allāh gave him kingdom and wisdom.”

SOLOMON

Solomon was not only heir to David’s kingdom (27:16), but further widened it by conquests. Here, too, it may be mentioned at the very outset that the Holy Qur’ān rejects the charge of idol-worship

against Solomon, which the Bible prefers in plain words, by asserting that the wives of Solomon "turned away his heart after other gods" (1 Kings 11:4). The Qur'ān disposes of this charge in very few words: "And Solomon disbelieved not but the devils disbelieved" (2:102). The Rev. T.K. Cheyne shows in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* that the Bible statement is incorrect: "That Solomon had a number of wives, both Israelite and non-Israelite, is probable enough, but he did not make altars for all of them, nor did he himself combine the worship of his wives' gods with that of Yahwe." The Qur'ān, however, goes further than this, for it says that the Queen of Sheba did turn a believer in God: "She said: My Lord, surely I have wronged myself, and I submit with Solomon to Allāh, the Lord of the worlds." (27:44)

The longest notice of Solomon is that connected with his conquest of Sheba. It starts with a description of the immense resources of his kingdom:

"O men! we have been taught the speech of birds, and we have been granted of all things. Surely this is manifest grace. And his hosts of the jinn and the men and the birds were gathered to Solomon, and they were formed into groups." (27:16, 17)

The use of birds in conveying messages made the birds a necessary adjunct to a military expedition, and the jinn were no doubt the hardy non-Israelite tribes subjugated to the Israelites. Elsewhere they are spoken of as "those who worked before him by the command of his Lord" (34:12), and "made for him what he pleased, of synagogues and images" (34:13). Clearly these were the foreigners whom Solomon employed to build the Temple, men skilled in architecture, for the Arabs, as Tabrezi, in his commentary on *Himāsa*, remarks, "speak of the jinn frequently likening a man who is clever in executing affairs to the *jinnī* and the *shaitān* or the devil." And men employed by Solomon in this and similar services are elsewhere spoken of as devils: "And the devils, every builder and diver, and others fettered in chains" (38:37, 38). The latter seem to be those who were forced into service or they may have been the prisoners of war.

After Solomon sets out for the conquest of Sheba, he passes the valley of the Naml, which should not be translated as the valley of the ants, for *Naml*, though meaning *ants*, is here used as a proper name, and *vād al-Naml*, or the valley of the Naml, is, according to the *Tāj al-‘Arūs* “situated between Jibrīn and Asqalān.” And the Namla are plainly spoken of as a tribe in the *Qāmūs*, which says: “Abriqa is of the waters of Namla.” This tribe, which very likely intervened between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba and formed like a buffer state, submitted to Solomon, and hence we find Solomon giving thanks to God: “My Lord, grant me that I may be grateful for Thy favour which Thou hast bestowed on me and on my parents.” (27:19)

A similar mistake is made in connection with Hudhud, who undoubtedly is mentioned as an officer of Solomon, but the word is misunderstood as meaning the *lapwing*. A similar name is Ben-hadad, a king of Syria (1 Kings 20:1), and the Arab writers speak of a king of Himyar as Hudad. The mistake arises from the fact that his name is mentioned in connection with the review of birds (27:20), but the reason of this seems to be that the man so named was some officer of the intelligence department of Solomon’s army. All that is related of him in the ten verses that follow shows him clearly to be a man and not a bird, for he brings to Solomon news about the Queen of Sheba, whom he finds along with her people “adoring the sun instead of Allāh” (27:24), and doing many unrighteous things: “And the devil has made their deeds fairseeming to them and thus turned them from the way.” Only a man could judge what a false belief or a wicked deed was. It is beyond the ken of a bird.

The Queen of Sheba at first sends a present to Solomon, which he considers as an affront and threatens to attack her territory. She submits to Solomon and comes to him, and is asked to “enter the palace,” which shows that she became his wife. In the palace, water ran under glass which the queen mistook for water itself. Thus did Solomon make her realize her error in worshipping the sun which was only an outward object, while the real source of life and power was God, Whose hand, unseen by man, worked in these

objects. It is then that the Queen believes in God and gives up the worship of other objects.

Solomon is again mentioned in connection with the destruction of the city of Saba', in ch. 34. Here we are told that the wind was made subservient to Solomon "it made a month's journey in the morning and a month's journey in the evening" (34:12). In 21:81 the words are: "And to Solomon (We subdued) the wind blowing violent, pursuing its course by His command to the land which We had blessed." The reference in both places is to Solomon's fleet which ran between the gulf of Aqaba and Ophir on the eastern coast of the Arabian peninsula, and brought him "fabulous amounts of gold and tropical products" according to the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, giving him "unlimited means for increasing the glory of his capital city and palace." This is referred to in what follows in 34:12 and 13, the making to flow of "a fountain of molten brass," and the making of "fortresses and images and bowls... and cooking pots."

But with all this glory Solomon's death was also the death-knell of his kingdom, and his successor was only "a creature of the earth that ate away his staff" (34:14), the reference being to the life of ease and luxury which Rehoboam led, the eating away of the staff indicating the disruption of his kingdom. Elsewhere we are told that Solomon's heir was "a mere body" (38:34). When Solomon saw this, "he turned to God" and prayed for a kingdom which should not be in danger of being wasted by others—the spiritual kingdom.

We are also told that Solomon had at heart no attraction for the wealth and good things of this life. The incident mentioned in this connection has been sometimes misinterpreted: "And We gave to David Solomon. Most excellent the servant! Surely he ever turned (to Allāh). When well-bred swift horses were brought to him at evening, so he said, I love the good things on account of the remembrance of my Lord—until they were hidden behind the veil," (He said): "Bring them back to me. So he began to stroke (their) legs and necks" (38:30-33). The incident is related to show that Solomon was a good horseman and that a prophet can also be

a good horseman, but under Jewish influence in all probability, some commentators have turned it into a puerile story that Solomon was so occupied with the horses that he forgot to say prayers before sunset and then began to cut off the legs and necks of the horses. There is no mention at all of any of these things in the Holy Qur'ān.

JOB

Of the other Biblical prophets, Job is mentioned four times. The longest reference to him is in 38:41-44, which is most probably an account of his flight from one place to another, for when he complains of toil and torment, he is urged to go on further—a lesson not to despair under difficulties. He is also spoken of as being given “his people and the like of them with them,” which signifies that he was brought back to his people and was blessed with more followers. A similar statement occurs in 21:83, 84. The forty-two chapters of the Bible are here condensed into perhaps as many words, and with more effect: “... Surely we found him patient; most excellent the servant! Surely he ever turned (to Us)” (38:44). Job is an example of patience under the severest sufferings and trials without losing faith in the goodness of God.

JONAH

References to Jonah are more frequent and he is mentioned in one of the earliest revelations, where the Holy prophet is told to bear persecution patiently and not to be like Jonah, who is called “the companion of the fish” (68:48-50). The whole is explained in another early revelation (37:139-148), but later than that referred to above. Jonah flies from his people, and 68:48 shows that he fled

before he received the Divine commandment to fly. He comes to a boat and is cast into the river. A fish draws him into its mouth. The word used by the Holy Qur'ān does not necessarily mean *devoured*. There is no mention of his remaining in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, all that is said being: "But had he not been of those who glorify (Us), he would have tarried in its belly till the day when they are raised" (37:143, 144), *i.e.*, would have been devoured and met death in its belly. Apparently, therefore, he was not devoured by the fish.

He was saved and sent to a hundred thousand people (37:147). In 10:98 we are told that the people of Jonah believed in him and profited by their faith.

ELIAS, ELISHA, EZEKIEL

Elias is mentioned twice, once at some length, showing that he preached against the worship of Bal or the sun-god (37:123-132). Elisha is mentioned once only by name (6:80), along with Ishmael and Jonah and Lot—all four being stated as excelling the world. Dhulkifl (21:85) is probably Ezekiel. Joshua is not mentioned by name, but is referred to along with Caleb in 5:23. The prophet Samuel is also not mentioned by name, but is referred to in 2:246-248. Daniel's vision (Dan. 8:3) is referred to in 18:83, and Ezekiel's vision (ch. 37) is referred to in 2:259.

EZRA

Ezra is mentioned only once in the Holy Qur'ān: "And the Jews say: Ezra is the son of Allāh: and the Christians say: The Messiah is the son of Allāh." (9:30)

Among the Israelite prophets, Ezra was undoubtedly specially honoured, and the Talmudists used very exaggerated language about him. In Rabbinical literature Ezra was considered “worthy of being the vehicle of the law had it not been already given through Moses” (*Jewish Encyclopaedia*). It appears that Ezra was actually spoken of as the son of God by a certain section of the Jews. Or, the words signify that he was considered a special favourite of God, in the sense in which the Jews and the Christians called themselves sons of God (5:18), meaning, *His specially favoured people*.

ZACHARIAS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

John the Baptist and his father, Zacharias, are mentioned twice at great length (19:1-15; 3:37-41), and both these accounts are followed by an account of the birth of Jesus Christ. When Zacharias receives the news of the birth of a son he wonders and is assured in words similar to those in which Mary wonders and is assured. But Zacharias is not struck dumb as in Luke 1:22, and there is no mention of unbelief on his part. On the other hand, as if to contradict Luke, it is related that he was ordered only not to speak to people for three days, being otherwise in the sound health (19:10), and the object of this silence is also made clear: “And remember thy Lord much and glorify (Him) in the evening and the morning” (3:41). It may be added that Zacharias in the Holy Qur’ān is expressly spoken of as a prophet in 6:85, and that John was a prophet is mentioned more than once (6:85; 3:39; 19:12). In the Bible, however, the Old Testament is brought to an end with Malachi, while the “New Dispensation” cannot admit of a prophet other than Jesus. Strangely enough, however, John is pronounced to be a prophet—nay, “more than a prophet”—by Jesus Christ himself (Matt. 11:9), and thus the position is quite anomalous. Again, the angel Gabriel who brought revelation to prophets is spoken of as bringing revelation to Zacharias (Luke 1:19). In fact,

the anomaly is due to the supposition of a break in prophethood previous to the bringing in of Jesus where actually there is none, as Jesus was only part of the chain of prophethood that extends from Moses to Jesus, the last link no doubt, as Moses was the first.

John the Baptist is, however, declared by the Evangelists to be greater than even Jesus Christ. He was "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15), while the Holy Ghost did not descend upon Jesus until he was baptised by John (Matt. 3:16). And Jesus says that among them that are born of woman there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist (Matt. 11:11), and Jesus himself was undoubtedly born of a woman. Even the Holy Qur'ān speaks of him in terms of great praise: "We granted him wisdom when a child, and kindheartedness from Us and purity. And he was dutiful... and he was not insolent, disobedient" (19:12-14). This shows clearly that according to the Holy Qur'ān, John was pure and sinless and he never disobeyed God. It is not, of course, meant that other prophets were not as pure; in fact, what is said of one prophet is equally true of others.

JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ is, according to the Holy Qur'ān, the last prophet of the Mosaic dispensation. He is mentioned by three different names: *'Isā* (Jesus), *Ibn Maryam* (the son of Mary) and *al-Masīh* (the Messiah). *Isā*, or Jesus, is the proper name; he is called the son of Mary to show that, like every human child, he was born of a woman, and one born of a woman could not be God (Job 25:4); and he is called the Messiah because he held the office of a prophet among the Israelites. But *Masīh* also means *one who travels in the land*, and the title may have reference to his travels from one country to another.

Jesus Christ is mentioned about twenty-five times in the Holy Qur'ān, and the longest notices of him which speak of his birth

and mission are those in which he is mentioned along with John the Baptist. These occur in ch. 19, which receives the name of Mary, his mother, one of the early Makka revelations, and in ch. 3, which receives the name of the Family of Amran, and is one of the early Madīna revelations. Besides these two occasions where the life-story of Jesus Christ is dealt with at some length along with the Christian doctrine, there is another early Makka revelation, the 18th chapter, which deals with the history of Christianity, and the 5th chapter, a late Madīna revelation, which deals with the Christian violation of the covenant. Another important fact in connection with the mention of Jesus Christ is that though the same importance is not given to his life-story as to that of Moses, yet much importance is attached to a refutation of the erroneous doctrines connected with his name, a refutation starting with one of the earliest revelations in ch. 112 and continued up to the latest in ch. 9.

As regards the life-story of Jesus Christ, the earliest revelation is ch. 19, which opens with the prayer of Zacharias for a son, and the first section deals with the birth and the mission of John. The second section deals with the birth and mission of Jesus Christ. V. 16 states that Mary, who lived in the holy temple as a child (3:37), had to leave the precincts of the temple for an eastern place, probably Nazareth. This, no doubt, took place on her attaining puberty, for the Jews considered a woman to be impure during her monthly courses. There she received in a vision the news of the birth of a son (v. 19). She wonders, (v. 20), because she had not as yet been married and is told that the child to whom she would give birth would be made a guide for the people, "a sign to men and a mercy from Us" (v. 21). We are then told that she conceived him (v. 22), "as women conceive" according to a saying of the Holy Prophet. After this she had to go to a distant place (compare Luke 2:2-6), and her confinement came during the journey (vv. 22, 23).

The third chapter, the Family of Amran, gives some details on these points not to be met with in ch. 19. In the first place it speaks of the birth of Mary herself, who, according to a vow made

by her mother, was to be devoted to the service of the temple at Jerusalem (3:35). Notwithstanding this she prays when she gives birth to the child that both the girl and "her offspring" may be vouchsafed Divine protection against the devil (3:36), showing that her mother expected her to marry and bear children, as women do. V. 37 tells us that as a child she remained in the charge of Zacharias and was brought up as a devout child. Here the subject is changed, Zacharias praying for and being granted a son, John the Baptist. The original subject is reverted to in v. 42, where Mary is spoken of as being chosen above other women of her time. Evidently this refers to the time when she was quite a grownup girl, and then in v.44 we are told that there was a contention as to the man in whose charge Mary should be placed. This in all probability refers to arrangements for her marriage, for her charge as a child has already been spoken of clearly in v. 37. It is at this point that the earlier narrative in ch. 19 begins speaking of her leaving the precincts of the temple for an eastern place. The part common to both narratives is her receiving the news in a vision, the angels speaking to her according to 3:45, that she would give birth to a son who would come in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy. The next verse tells us that he would attain to old age and be one of the righteous. In 3:47 she wonders, because her marriage had not as yet taken place, and is reassured. The further details of conception and birth are not met with here.

In both narratives, however, there is a gap up to the time that Jesus is called and preaches to his people. In ch. 3, the news of the birth of a son in v. 47 is immediately followed in vv. 49-52 by the call of Jesus and his preaching. In ch. 19, the account of his birth is similarly followed. Evidently the coming of Mary with Jesus to her people, as spoken of in 19:27, does not relate to the time of Jesus' birth which is the subject-matter of the previous verse, but to a later time, because it is unthinkable that a woman should thus make a show of a new-born baby, and because Mary at the time was journeying to a distant place (19:22). V. 27 speaking of Mary going along with Jesus to her people while he was riding an animal, probably contains a reference to the episode of Jesus riding

on an ass and a colt (Matt. 21:1-7). Moreover the reply given by Jesus Christ to the people on this occasion cannot possibly relate to the time when he was a mere baby, because in that reply he clearly speaks of *having been made* a prophet and *having been commanded* to say prayers and give alms while *he lived*. A baby a day old could not have been made a prophet, nor could he be commanded to say prayers and give alms. Here are the words conclusively showing that 19:27-32 relates to the time when Jesus had received the call, and offended the elders of the Israelites by his preaching:

“He said: I am indeed a servant of Allāh. He has given me the Book and made me a prophet. And He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined on me prayer and poor-rate so long as I live: And to be kind to my mother; and He has not made me insolent, unblessed.”

As I have said, however, greater stress is laid upon the doctrines connected with the name of Jesus than the details of his life, and even the circumstances relating to his life are meant to be a denial of his divinity. We are told that his mother conceived him, quite a superfluous detail of life-history, unless it is meant to show that he could not be God or the Son of God, for the idea of conception in the mother's womb is incompatible with Divinity. The severity of pains during labour, which makes Mary cry out: “Oh, would that I had died before this” (19:23), is not only to show that Mary gave birth to Jesus under the ordinary circumstances which women experience in giving birth to children, but also seems to contain a deeper reference to Gen. 3:16, “In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children,” which, according to the Bible, was the punishment inflicted on woman because of Eve's alleged sin. He is also mentioned as speaking “when in the cradle and when of old age” (3:46), to show the change of condition from childhood to old age, while change in the Divine Being is impossible. The prominent features of his preaching when called to the office of a prophet also show the same tendency. He is spoken of as “a servant of Allāh” (19:30; 43:59), by no means disdaining to be a servant of Allāh (4:172), as “a prophet” (19:30),

“a messenger to the children of Israel” (3:49), nothing more than a messenger, before whom numerous messengers had passed away (5:75), one who had to learn “the Torah” (3:48), repeatedly saying: “Allāh is my Lord and your Lord; therefore serve Him” (3:51; 5:117; 19:36; 43:64). Along with his mother he is spoken of as “eating food” (5:75), showing that he had all the needs and weaknesses of a mortal. He is even made to deny his divinity in plain words:

“And when Allāh will say: O Jesus son of Mary, didst thou say to men, Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allāh? He will say: Glory be to Thee! it was not for me to say what I had no right to (say).” (5:116)

A noteworthy feature of the narrative of Jesus Christ in the Holy Qur’ān is the mention of his death which occurs thrice in plain words and several times by implication:

“When Allāh said: O Jesus, I will cause thee to die and exalt thee in My presence and clear thee of those who disbelieve and make those who follow thee above those who disbelieve to the day of Resurrection.” (3:55)

“I said to them naught save as Thou didst command me: Serve Allāh, my Lord and your Lord; and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst cause me to die, Thou wast the Watcher over them. And Thou art Witness of all things.” (5:117)

“They indeed disbelieve who say: Surely Allāh—He is the Messiah, son of Mary. Say: Who then could control anything as against Allāh when He wished to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary, and his mother and all those on the earth.” (5:17)

The first of these verses shows that Jesus Christ was comforted by Divine revelation, when his enemies planned to take away his life by violence, that he would be made to die a natural death. But this promise does not stand alone; it is the first of four promises; death, after death exaltation in Divine presence, then clearance from false charges and lastly the triumph of the Christians over the Jews. The order in which these promises are mentioned is the order

in which they actually took place. The second verse shows that the doctrine of the Divinity of Jesus Christ did not grow up before his eyes, but was invented by his followers *after his death*, and the verse is conclusive as showing that Jesus Christ was made a god after his death. The third gives the reason for laying stress on his death, and says in effect that if Jesus Christ had been God, as alleged by the Christians, he would not have tasted of death, as did his mother and his compatriots.

Of the verses which speak of Jesus Christ's death by implication, I would content myself only with three:

"The Messiah, son of Mary, was only a messenger; messengers before him had indeed passed away. And his mother was a truthful woman. They both used to eat food. See how We make the messages clear to them! then behold, how they are turned away." (5:75)

"And Muḥammad is but a messenger—messengers have already passed away before him." (3:144)

"And those whom they call on besides Allāh have created naught, while they are themselves created. Dead (are they), not living. And they know not when they will be raised." (16:20, 21)

The first verse in this case states that as all the messengers before Jesus Christ had died, so he, too, must have died, because like them he was a mortal and like them he ate food. The second states in clear words that all the prophets before Muḥammad had passed away, and thus includes Jesus Christ among the dead. And the third says that all those who had been taken as gods before the Qur'ān—and Jesus Christ was one of them—were dead, nor one of them being alive. And yet in spite of so many clear statements, the idea finds acceptance among some Muslims that Jesus Christ is still alive. This idea no doubt came originally from the Christian tradition, and then, owing to the prophecy of the second advent of the Messiah, which meant nothing more nor less than the appearance of one in his "spirit and power" (Luke 1:17), it slowly gained ground. There is nothing, however, in the Holy Qur'ān, nor

even in the sayings of the Holy Prophet, which lends any support to this idea. True it is that the Holy Qur'ān speaks of the *raf'* or exaltation of Jesus Christ, but it is after his death, as plainly stated in 3:55. Nor does *raf'* (exaltation) by God signify a translation of the body of a mortal to heaven; it only signifies exaltation in rank.

One point, however, needs to be elucidated. The Holy Qur'ān negatives the death of Jesus on the cross, but a negation of death by crucifixion does not amount to a negation of natural death. And what actually happened is stated thus: "And they killed him not, nor did they cause his death on the cross, but he was made to appear to them as such. And certainly those who differ therein are in doubt about it" (4:157). The Qur'ān thus asserts that Jesus Christ did not meet with his death on the cross, but was made to resemble one crucified. The story that he was lifted up to heaven while someone else was made to resemble him and suffered crucifixion is one of which no trace is met with in the Holy Book, nor in any saying of the Holy Prophet. What the Qur'ān says concerning the crucifixion of Jesus—that he was nailed to the cross but did not die on it—is exactly what appears to be the truth from a perusal of the Gospels. The Qur'ān is not a book of history and is not concerned with the details of what happened to him after the crucifixion, but it tells us that both he and his mother were given "a refuge on a lofty ground having meadows and springs" (23:50), which description applies to Kashmir. And there is a saying of the Holy Prophet that Jesus lived to the age of 120 years.

Thus, according to the Qur'ān, Jesus Christ was born like a mortal and he died like a mortal. He lived the life of a righteous man and was entrusted with a Divine message "to the Israelites" (3:49). But these people rejected him, planned against his life, and denounced him as a bastard, calling his mother an adulteress (4:156). If the Qur'ān had, therefore, to denounce the doctrine of his divinity, it had also to defend him against false accusations. It is for this reason that it speaks of his mother as "a truthful woman" (5:75), and speaks of Jesus Christ himself as "a word" from God and "a spirit from Him." He is called a word from God because he came in fulfillment of a word "which He communicated to Mary"

(4:171), just as the Holy Prophet is reported to have said, "I am the prayer of my father, Abraham," because of the prayer of Abraham referred to in 2:129. Mary was told that the son she would bear would be a righteous man and a prophet, and it is in reference to this prophecy that he is called a word from God. Or, it may be in reference to the prophecies of the previous prophets that he may have been so called. Similarly his being called "a spirit from Him" may be in reference to the denial of the charge of illegitimacy against him, because illicit sexual relations are ascribed to the devil. It must, however, be borne in mind that Jesus is spoken of only as *a* word from God or *a* spirit from Him, and not as *the* word or *the* spirit. Though he may have been called a word especially with reference to the prophecy of his birth, yet every creature of God is His word in one sense because it comes into existence by a Divine commandment, and hence it is that the Holy Qur'ān speaks of the words of God as being too numerous to be exhausted by writing down: "Say: If the sea were ink for the words of my Lord, the sea would surely be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, though We brought the like of it to add (thereto)" (18:109). Similarly, though he may have been called a spirit from God in reference to the charge against his mother, the Holy Qur'ān also speaks of the spirit of God being breathed into every human being: "Then he made his progeny of an extract, of worthless water. Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit" (32:8-9). The spirit of God being breathed into every man seems to be directed against the Christian doctrine that every man is born in sin and a bonds slave to the devil.